

Ice-Gunning In Old Days

Edmund Brownell Weston in his Memoirs of the Weston family mentions the "great white owls" that used to be seen on Duxbury Beach.

"As I remember these owls, they had large yellow eyes and some of them were 2 feet high. I recall one amusing, but sad for me, experience, when my father shot at one of the very largest of these owls. We then drove up to the owl and it appeared to be wounded and inert and did not fly away, and my father said he would put on his heavy gloves after he had loaded his gun and put the owl inside of our closed wagon. He loaded his gun and put on his gloves and was about to take hold of the owl when the owl coolly spread its wings and flew away...On other occasions he shot more or less of these owls and had one or 2 of them stuffed, but none of them was such a magnificent specimen as the one that flew away."

Edmund also mentions the practice of shooting peeps "from horse and carriage." "The best time for shooting was from about half-ebb to low tide and the surface of the outside of the beach, from a short distance

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below highwater mark to low water mark was hard and compact and a horse and carriage could be driven over it with ease and rapidity."

Elsewhere he speaks of an ice-gunning boat for stalking wild fowl, especially geese when they were feeding on flats in the bay. It was a low flat-bottomed boat painted white to simulate an ice cake, and the men in the boat were clad in white. The craft was propelled with 2 muffled oars or was sculled with one muffled oar. There was a round hole in the stern for that purpose. The approach, he says, was "to the leeward of the birds."